CLAIMS

1.   A method for preventing a remote user of a computer from discovering that the computer is in communication with an external device, comprising:

  connecting the external device to the computer via a connectionless port;

5   providing a key to be used to generate valid authorization information to be included in all valid data packets sent between the computer and the external device; and

   configuring the external device to reply to any packet in which the required valid authorization information is not present with the packet that would

10 be sent if the connectionless port were not in use.

2.   The method of claim 1 wherein the port is a user datagram protocol (UDP) port.

3.   The method of claim 1 further comprising using the computer to generate the key and sending the key to the external device.

4.   The method of claim 1 wherein the packet that would be sent if the port was not

15 in use is the Internet Control Message Protocol (ICMP) packet that would be sent if the port were not in use.

5.   The method of claim 1 wherein the external device is a second computer.

6.   A system for preventing a remote user of a computer from discovering that the computer is in communication with an external device, comprising:

20   a computer having a connectionless port; and

   an external device connected to the connectionless port;

wherein the external device is configured to reply to any packet received via the connection to the connectionless port in which valid authorization information is not present with the packet that would be sent if the connectionless port were not in use.

5   7.   A computer program product for preventing a remote user of a computer from discovering that the computer is in communication with an external device connected to the computer via a connectionless port, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

    providing a key to be used to generate valid authorization information to

10   be included in all valid data packets sent between the computer and the external device; and

    causing the external device to reply to any packet in which the required valid authorization information is not present with the packet that would be sent if the connectionless port were not in use.

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